

Holding ourselves to a higher standard

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It was disappointing to learn that legislators decided to snub Chief Justice Barbara Madsen of the state Supreme Court, by refusing to allow her to present the traditional state of the judiciary speech when the Legislature convenes this month.

Such is the state of political discourse in our country these days. Differing opinions are barely tolerated and it seems more important to score points against opponents than to actually deliver results for citizens. The tactics often mimic what happens on elementary school playgrounds.

Legislative leaders said the decision to keep Madsen from speaking was practical, not political. She could just send a copy of the speech, one lawmaker observed. But it seems more likely that this was petty payback for the contempt citation the court imposed on the Legislature last September for failing to make adequate progress towards fully funding education.

Father Thomas Merton once observed the importance of cutting through the politics, with its false promises, and focusing on the human dimension, what he called “genuine reality.”

We would do well to heed his advice to care more about people and less about politics. Going beyond politics can much more readily happen at the local level where important relationships have been developed and there is a greater sense that we are all in this together. At the state and national levels, we increasingly have a democracy that exists in name only. Naked political ambition fueled by well-financed special interests conspire to create the illusion that the public good is at heart of decisions.

If we are to rebuild a more genuine, civic-minded and human-centered approach, it will have to begin at the local level where relationships matter more than politics and it looks more like genuine democracy and less like the Jerry Springer show.

This is the opinion of The Wenatchee World and its Editorial Board: Publisher Rufus Woods, Editor Cal FitzSimmons and Editorial Page Editor Tracy Warner.